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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS ROUNDUP: REPORT OF DEATH IN CUSTODY;
ARRESTS CONTINUE; TWO NEW HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS
LAUNCHED

Classified By: CDA Stephen A. Seche for reasons 1.4(b)/(d)

11. DEATH OF POLITICAL DETAINEE REPORTED: According to news reports, the body of 26-year old Mohammed Shafer Haysa was turned over to his family earlier this week. News reports in offshore media stated that Haysa had died as a result of torture. Human rights activist Anwar al-Bunni told Poloff on April 26 that Haysa had died of a heart attack and that his body bore evidence of earlier torture from several months ago. According to Bunni, Haysa had no previous history of medical problems. Haysa, along with 12 other men from the Hama province village of Sauron and four men from the village of Shiha, had been arrested approximately six months ago by Syrian Military Intelligence on charges of being members of the militant Islamist group Jund-e Sham. According to Bunni, the men were devout Muslims but there was no indication that they were members in a militant Islamic organization. Bunni noted that Haysa and the other detainees had been transferred to Sednaya Prison and that Haysa's torture probably occurred while they were held in detention facilities, as "they don't torture" at Sednaya.

12. (C) ARRESTS CONTINUE UNABATED: Human rights organizations also report that the arrest wave continues, affecting civil society and Islamist activists alike. According to Bunni, twenty men were arrested in the city of Dara'a on April 19. The men are accused of being members of the Islamist group Hezb ut-Tahrir (HuT). Meanwhile, a number of activists were also arrested. In as-Salamiya, civic activist Hossein Daood was arrested on April 18. Post contacts were unable to provide further information on Daood's background or reasons for his arrest. In Damascus, 87-year old Muooteei Mansour was arrested April 19 after distributing a flyer criticizing the Syrian government. Also on April 19, Jihan Mohammed Ali, Adnan Khalil Rashid, Waheed Jihad Moustafa, and Fawzi Ali Kahwa were arrested by Political Security Directorate forces in Aleppo on suspicion of being members of the Kurdish PKK-affiliated Democratic Union Party.

13. (C) TWO NEW HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS ANNOUNCED: Two new human rights organizations have appeared on the activist stage in the last two weeks. The National Organization for Human Rights (NOHR, or in Arabic al-Monazema al-Wataniya L-Huquq al-Ensan) distributed its first press release on April 8, announcing its formation. Former Arab Human Rights Organization (AHRO) spokesman Ammar Qurrabi, activist lawyer Khalil Maatouk, and former Damascus Spring prisoner Habib Aissa are among the founding members. According to Bunni, the NOHR was formed by AHRO members like Qurrabi who were disgruntled by the AHRO's increasingly ideological platform. "Now only the Nasserists are left (in the AHRO)," said Bunni.

14. (C) Meanwhile, the Syrian Human Rights Network announced its formation by press release on April 18. The Network serves as an umbrella organization for nine different local human rights organizations, and is led by veteran human rights activist Aktham Naisse, who runs three of the network member organizations. According to Bunni, whose Syrian Center for Legal Research and Studies is another member, the organization seeks to improve cooperation between Syria's myriad of human rights organizations. Both Bunni and Zeituneh, however, were skeptical that the Network would in fact take an active role, noting that a number of prominent organizations like the Human Rights Association of Syria (HRAS) had not joined. Bunni added that there had not yet been a meeting of the Network members and that none was scheduled. Haithem al-Maleh, founder of HRAS, questioned the motivations of the Network's founders, telling Poloff on April 27 that the Network's founders were more interested in seeking publicity than actually working on human rights issues.

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